

EMPLOYER SERVICE CENTER OPERATIONAL

Good news for employers...the PERSI Employer Service Center (ESC) is ready to make your life easier. What is the ESC? It's a *one-stop shop* for quickly getting your questions answered or problems resolved. It will change the way we do business with employers. The first step in PERSI's phased rollout of the ESC was to process PETRA reports on a first-in/first-out basis. Now in phase two, we are implementing enhancements to our phone system.

Employers have been accustomed to calling the fiscal department with questions or to clarify issues in the past. You are still encouraged to call whenever you need assistance, the difference now is you'll be able to call directly into

the ESC, bypassing the receptionist. While this may not seem like a big deal, eliminating the "go-between" will save employers time. This simple change is one of many operating improvements being undertaken by PERSI to make employer interaction easier.

Two dedicated phone numbers have been set up for employers to reach the ESC staff. The local number for employers in the Boise area is (208) 287-9525; for all other employers we have a new toll-free number, which is 866-887-9525.

We will keep employers posted as other changes take effect; for now, we hope we're making life a little better for PERSI employers.

PETRA PASSWORDS AND PRIVACY

- a hot topic at 2005 employer meetings

The hottest discussion during this year's employer meetings came from payroll personnel about passwords in PETRA (PERSI Electronic Transmittal Report Application) and protecting their personal account information. Payroll staff expressed concern the password they use to access PETRA is the same one they use to access their personal PERSI account information. When a primary payroll person is out of the office, and someone else needs to log on to PETRA, the payroll clerk's password is used to complete the log on. Once logged on, the "back-up" person can access the primary payroll clerk's personal information. This was a source of worry for many payroll clerks.

To remedy this privacy issue, employers can simply add more payroll contacts. By calling a PERSI financial technician in the Employer Service Center at (208) 287-9525 or 866-887-9525, employers can put additional names on PERSI's authorized contacts list. Each authorized person will be able to log on to PETRA using their own unique password, thereby eliminating the privacy concern.

Three Steps

- First-time users must register. Before going on line, they should call PERSI to be added to the authorized contact list for their employer. Personal information will be verified to activate PETRA access.

- Those recognized by PERSI as authorized contacts should go on line to register and establish a password. Visit the PERSI Web site at www.persi.state.id.us. Go to the Employer tab, and click on Transmittal Reporting on the drop-down menu. Next click the PETRA link, which will bring up the PETRA log on screen. Follow the Registration link, completing the information and submitting the form. A password will then be emailed by PERSI to the person registering. This is the same form and process used by members to register for access to their personal accounts. However, because this is going through the PETRA link, anyone not recognized by PERSI as an authorized employer contact, will be automatically rejected by the system and registration will not be completed.

Employers using non-PERSI members to process payroll—either contractors or persons not eligible for PERSI membership—must also put them on the authorized list by calling PERSI. The caller will be asked to provide personal information such as name, Social Security number, and date of birth. Once on the list, the contractor or non-PERSI member can complete the on line registration.

- Payroll staff who believe their password has been compromised can make a change on line. If they are not already logged on to PETRA, they can click the [Help](#) link on the PETRA log on page. This link will take them to instructions on changing their password. The instructions are near the end of the page. Those already logged on to PETRA can

simply click on the [Change Password](#) link at the bottom of the page.

Privacy Protected and Employers Benefit Too

According to financial supervisor Debbie Buck, "By following these guidelines, payroll personnel can rest assured their personal account information cannot be accessed by others. Their privacy is protected." Having multiple back-up personnel in place, who are preauthorized and registered to submit transmittals, could improve employer operations, notes Debbie. "Employers don't need to rely on a single source for their transmittals." As always, a PERSI financial technician will gladly walk a newly authorized person through the first transmittal.

PERSI CLARIFIES ITS ROLE WITH MEDICARE PART D

Last month, PERSI devoted its newsletters to the new Medicare Part D prescription program. It's come as no surprise members are calling for additional information. PERSI prides itself on providing a high level of customer service, but finds itself in an unusual situation...the questions being raised by our members have little to do with PERSI, and a whole lot to do with insurance and employers.

PERSI's role with Medicare Part D has been to provide members with an overview of the program. We are not in a position to respond to specific questions about employer-sponsored retirement insurance; these types of questions should be answered by insurers and employer payroll personnel. What we do know is PERSI will treat Medicare Part D deductions exactly like it has been dealing with Parts A and B — we aren't involved with premium deductions. Retired members with Medicare Parts A and B typically have the premiums deducted

from their Social Security checks or pay the costs directly themselves. It will be the same for Part D. Premiums for employer-sponsored insurance will continued to be deducted from retirement checks or sick leave as currently provided.

Admittedly, this is a confusing time. This new Medicare feature is confusing to the insurance providers, employers, and to our members and retirees. PERSI will continue training its staff to answer Medicare program-related questions, and will refer callers to employers and insurance providers as appropriate. We would encourage employers *not* to refer employees with insurance questions to PERSI, but rather to the insurance provider. We want to help our members get to the right source for accurate information.

REMINDER

PERSI has requested all school districts to submit their current policies and/or master contract on sick leave accrual, but we haven't had much response. Please help PERSI keep its records up-to-date. Send your information to Judy Aitken via e-mail at jaitken@persi.state.id.us or mail it to her attention at the Boise headquarters location at 607 N. 8th Street, Boise, ID 83702. Thanks!

Notes

PERSI's Chief Investment Officer Bob Maynard was one of the guest speakers at the National Council on Teacher Retirement (NCTR) conference held in Tampa, Florida last month.

PERSI's management team exchanged ideas and discussed topics of shared interest with the Oregon, Nevada, Montana, and Washington retirement systems at the Northwest Pension Peer Conference held the last week of October.